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SUBJECT: UNGIFT TIP WORKSHOP IN SIERRA LEONE: A LIMITED SUCCESS

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1 .4(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: On April 8-9 2008, the Ministry of Internal Affairs hosted a workshop co-organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) entitled "Building Capacities of the National Task Force In Control of Trafficking in Persons in Conflict and Post Conflict Contexts." The stated purpose of the workshop was to inform stakeholders of the various international conventions and protocols that form the legal framework to combat TIP, and to validate the three-year action plan created by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL)-chaired Task Force over the course of the past five months. Poloff, Special Projects Coordinator, and Political Assistant attended the majority of the sessions, contributing encouragement and technical assistance when necessary. Though an excellent information-sharing session, the utility of the workshop was undermined by an overly ambitious agenda for the time allotted. Participants had little time to discuss implementation of the action-plan, which is the most immediate and critical concern for the GoSL anti-trafficking effort that is suffering from inertia and lack of human and fiscal resources. END SUMMARY.

SETTING THE STAGE: LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

¶12. (U) On April 8, The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Kalilu Kalokoh, formally opened the conference, stating that it is one of several to be held across West Africa as a follow-up to an initial November 2007 meeting in Cote d'Ivoire. Deputy Minister Kalokoh stated that co-hosting the conference with UNODC is a sign of the Government of Sierra Leone's commitment to fighting trafficking in persons. The Assistant Inspector General of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Kadie Fakondoh, also welcomed the media, and GoSL and NGO representatives present, and discussed the cases that were reported throughout the year, highlighting the prevalence of trafficking of minors. UNODC National Programme Officer Papa Babacar Ndiaye stated that TIP presents a global threat to human security while undermining social and political stability.

¶13. (C) Following these introductory remarks, many in attendance departed, leaving some task force members and a few representatives of the SLP. When Poloff commented privately to Ndiaye a concern that some key stakeholders were not participating, he replied that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is not the leading ministry on TIP and an irregular task force member, failed to produce invitations or publicize the event as promised. Ndiaye drafted the invitations himself when he arrived in Sierra Leone on April 4, which meant participants did not receive them until the afternoon of April 7. Several task force members did not

attend due to scheduling conflicts. Though turnout was disappointing, one promising note is that Thomas Lahai, Chief Superintendent of Police and new to the issue, attended the entire workshop.

4) (U) The substantive sessions that followed the introduction included information on international protocols and conventions and mechanisms against trafficking. An additional session was held on the work of the Special Court of Sierra Leone, and how international criminal courts and tribunals contribute to the anti-trafficking legal framework.

THE TIP ACTION PLAN: MOVING BEYOND THE OXYMORON

15. (C) The April 9 sessions were more interactive than those held the previous day, with a brief focus on investigation techniques and mechanisms for international cooperation to combat crime. This was followed by dialogue on the three-year action plan created by the GoSL-led anti-TIP task force. Though this session was arguably the most important from a practical perspective for the vast majority of the attendees, this session was cut from three hours to 40 minutes to make up for lost time when the schedule ran over by four hours. This undermined the participants' ability to have an in-depth discussion on the action plan.

16. (U) Despite the time constraint, the discussion on the action plan was lively and produced some concrete results and next steps. The primary outcome was agreement that a Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (MOSWGCA) representative must act as a full-time TIP coordinator until the permanent TIP Secretariat is established. The 2005 trafficking legislation mandates that the GoSL establish and

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fund a TIP secretariat, but does not provide a time-frame. The current arrangement, with a TIP focal point person who manages the TIP portfolio as one of many responsibilities, has been ineffective in providing sufficient oversight and anti-TIP advocacy. Workshop participants pressed hard for a firm commitment from the MOSWGCA to approve a TIP Coordinator. The current TIP point person agreed to assume the interim TIP Coordinator position, pending Ministry approval. Other concrete outcomes from the discussion were the addition of new monitoring and evaluation activities to the action plan, and, ultimately, agreement from participants to validate and implement the action plan.

17. (C) While validating the action-plan is a positive step, the lack of funding to support implementation continues to be a problem. Olatunde Olayemi, the ECOWAS consultant who assisted in the action-plan drafting process, was deeply concerned that limited financial resources would give the task force another reason to delay implementing activities. His concern is legitimate since the several action-plans introduced over the last three years were barely implemented because of lack of resources (COMMENT: As indicated in previous reporting, the former regime depleted Sierra Leone's treasury and gave scant attention to TIP and other human rights issues. The new government seems committed to changes. END COMMENT). The task force desperately needs a strong leader who can manage the process and advocate for funding and support from the highest government levels.

COMMENT: ARE WE TREADING WATER?

18. (C) The attempt to establish an interim TIP coordinator is a good idea, but the task force will continue to languish if the GoSL does not provide adequate support. Further, the selection of the current TIP focal point person to become coordinator is problematic because she has a questionable understanding of TIP as well as little to no political

capital or connections with which to lobby on behalf of the issue within government. While pushing for movement is a positive sign, there is a great possibility that the end result will be unproductive.

¶9. (C) It was clear to the UNODC and ECOWAS representatives that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which has oversight of the SLP, is not fully engaged on this issue. Though their failure to actively co-host the event through timely notification of key participants was problematic, Chief Superintendent Lahai's participation might re-invigorate the SLP's anti-TIP activities. This may be the most positive and unexpected workshop outcome. END COMMENT.

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